Beyond the Court Jester: Renée and Barbara's Blossoming Love [Updated Version]

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by lefemmerouge

Summary

Some time has passed since Renée lost Harleen. She is still in daze about what happened to the woman she had grown so close to, the woman she had bonded with in a such a deep way, unlike anyone else. One morning, at a low-key coffee shop in Gotham, she is comforted by her best friend and confidante, Barbara. She begins to realize that their connection may go beyond a simple friendship. Barbara feels the same, but she is afraid that if she expresses how she truly feels, it could disrupt their "beautiful friendship" and destroy their deep bond as women. What comes next is up to them...

Notes

Hey everyone! Happy Lesbian Visibility Day and Happy April 26th! It is being posted on here for the first time.

I wanted to expand on a story I originally posted on AO3 back in mid-September 2024, where it garnered over 190 hits, 14 kudos, a few bookmarks, and 18 comments (half of which were my replies) and later on here (with 50 hits), but not on Quotev or Wattpad, although I'm not sure exactly why. Anyway, since I published the fic on AO3, the fandom on there remains relatively small, with only 32 fics for characters in Caped Crusader. Only one with that pairing has been published since September 2024. Furthermore, only one other fic for the pairing, as depicted in Caped Crusader, is on AO3: "Take Care of Barbie for Me. My fic goes a different direction than that one, but their perspective is just as valid! That was written a month before the original version of this fic was written. Presently, there are only 16 fics in *all on AO3* with Renee/Barbara in a relationship, although that is mostly how these characters are depicted in Batgirl (Comics), Gotham Knights (Video Game), Batman: The Animated Series, Birds of Pray (Comics), Teen Titans (Animated Series), Batwoman (Comic), and Justice League Unlimited (Cartoon).

Otherwise, some of the text is inspired by how the "R.O.D.: Official Archive" book describes the romantic feelings between Yomiko Readman

and Nancy Makuhari. It continually describes them as close friends even though it notes elsewhere, when a secondary character in "R.O.D. the TV" has a crush on the protagonist, that the crush is romantic. This annoyed me ever since reading it. I'm not going to spoil anything for those who haven't watched the "Read or Die" OVA or "R.O.D. the TV", but I will say that their relationship goes further than a friendship in my view and views of other critics, fans, etc.

Many of the changes were made for the version on a certain site (and revised here), using articles listed in the end note, as inspirations, and my other thoughts. This makes this fic much better, and stronger, than the original. I further revised the title of this fic from the original ("Beyond the Court Jester: Renée and Barbara's New Love?") to a new title ("Beyond the Court Jester: Renée and Barbara's Blossoming Love"), while removing the question mark from the end of the title. I changed another detail too: the coffee shop owner was also changed from a man to a woman. I added more to indicate when Renée and Barbara are meeting, their feelings toward one another, and how Renée feels about Harleen, considering what she knows prior to their meeting and learns in the course of the fic itself.

In the ending A/N for the original version of this fic, I said that I had guessed on the eye colors of Renée and Barbara from Caped Crusader, adding that I did not see anything about it online. Now there are fandom pages for both characters. The one for Barbara says she has brown eyes while the one for Renée says she has black eyes. I used both pages to enhance this fic.

As I said in my original A/N, I came up with the idea for this fic after seeing the small number of fics for the fandom. I liked this series a lot, even as someone who enjoyed "The Batman" (2004-2008) and "Batman: The Animated Series" (1992-1995) as well. Furthermore, I saw some possible romantic subtext between Renée and Barbara. I know others may not ship them. In my view, Barbara can be just as gay as Renée. I look forward to whenever season two comes out, maybe this year.

Hope you all enjoy this fic, which was exclusive to another site but is no longer. This fic has also been posted on the Internet Archive.

Comments, and constructive criticism, are welcome and appreciated.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by Beyond the Court Jester: Renée and Barbara's New Love? by lefemmerouge

Renée still couldn't believe it. She had been asked out on a date by Harleen, but it ended early. Harleen had told her to meet at a certain place. But, she *never* showed up. Instead, she got a call from her, saying that she would be leaving town and would never be coming back. She didn't know what had happened. Had she done *anything* wrong? Everything was all mixed up. Perhaps she should have expected this. After all, Harleen was acting *weird* as of late. Maybe it was "natural" for them to be together, or even a bit tantalizing. She *knew* that Harleen was a well-meaning psychiatrist whose clientele were some of the most powerful people in Gotham. She was saddled with their problems. Due to the privilege between her clients, and herself, she couldn't tell Renée about any of it. She didn't mind. She thought that perhaps *some* of these clients, who she guessed were mainly men, had confessed their awful actions to her, internally messing her up.

Usually, Harleen was whimsical and fun. That was part of the reason she started going out with her in the first place. Harleen's parents immigrated from Korea before she was born. At the same time, Renée's parents had also immigrated, but from Mexico, after the massive political and social upheaval in that country. While their backgrounds were different, they had bonded all the same, since both of them faced some discrimination as brown-skinned people in the city. There were sneers from some White men who grumbled about "their jobs" being taken away by "immigrant trash." Some people wanted to only retain "good" White people in city jobs, whether police officers, public defenders, or court psychiatrists. However, there had been a push by some organizations to ensure that the city retained its diversity. Even so, racism remained endemic to the system, integrated into its inner-workings. Neither Harleen or Renée, nor those of any race, were free from it. Recently, Harleen had been acting a bit scary, and a little menacing, almost too much for Renée's taste. She had been able to calm Harleen down, but it had been a challenge to do so.

It had been a few weeks since the fateful night that Harleen called her and threw her life into disarray, making her spiral downward. She was unsure what to do. She confided in her long-time best friend, ~~Ms. Gordon~~ Barbara, who helped her regain her footing. She was the city's resolute public defender. While sometimes she had to defend despicable people, she *strongly* believed that everyone had the right to, and deserved, legal representation. People had scoffed at her idealism, even her father, the decorated police commissioner, who thought he could reform the system from the inside. She pulled Renée aside one day. They met at a local coffee shop the next morning. At the time they arrived, there were very few people there, as Barbara had expected. The last thing either one of them wanted was for someone to report them. Renée wasn't sure why she'd been called there, but she had always trusted her friend. She was

always down to hang out with her no matter what. Despite being with Harleen, she had always felt close to Barbara, and thought she could tell her whatever was on her mind.

"Hey, Barbara, I...keep thinking back to that night...I can't get it out of my head, as hard as I try."

She sighed. She knew that Renée had been through a lot. She wanted to put her friend at ease, even though she had never had a relationship with another woman, or anyone, before. She knew they had a "screwball flirtation" as some called it. She was furious that her friend's now-ex-girlfriend had used psychiatry as a weapon. She worried that people could now easily dismiss psychiatrists, claiming that going to a "shrink" was not worth their time, causing them to keep their problems inside, resulting in further damage to their mental states. She already had dealt with the ramifications of Harleen no longer seeing any clients. It's like she had disappeared off the map.

"You didn't do anything wrong...Harleen did some...*questionable things*...which are unforgivable."

Renée slightly knew what she meant. She had heard, from Barbara, that Harleen had saved her after her laboratory exploded, and that she fell off a cliff. She was grateful that Batman had saved her paramour. However, she didn't know much more than what had been discussed in police reports and around police headquarters. The reports only noted a destroyed house without adding much more of note.

"I know what you told me...but was there anything *more* she did?...I thought she was...a good person."

Barbara grumbled. She had tried to avoid upsetting Renée the last few weeks. So, she hadn't told her *everything*. She had carefully talked about what had happened. She didn't want to make her friend even more worried and despondent. She knew what is was like to stand up for those who were victimized by the broken system of law enforcement and supposed "justice" in Gotham. She and her father were close but had different motivations and friends. They had their own struggles. Her father dealt with the pressure with being a Black man in a leadership. She dealt with being a Black woman in an important position. She often faced a mixture of sexism and racism together. More recently, she had begun to question her ideals, even though she felt that working with Batman was worth it, despite the fact that he remained a mysterious figure. She did not know who he really was or his goals for Gotham itself.

"Well…she *was* my friend...but I saw her experimenting on a bunch of people and dressing up like a jester in a medieval court." She paused.

Her voice was shaking. "She even trapped Batman in a tube...and almost killed him."

Renée hadn't heard *that* part. It didn't square with the Harleen she knew. Surely she had been through a lot, but she was bubbly and she cared about her clients and *her*, so much. Was the woman that she had loved, so deeply and fully, a complete lie? Was *nothing* about her...real? Was there a part of her she didn't know? These questions floated around in her head. She was starting to question everything. If she had seen the laboratory before it burned down, she would have been chilled to the bone. To see the woman she felt deeply for, with such a keen insight, terrifying and haunting others by engaging in unspeakable actions through bringing her wealthy clients to a "playroom" for their "playtime" would have broken her. Harleen's former clients were much worse off now than before. In that place, of her own creation, Harleen showed her true colors: she was cruel and corrupt to her core.

"What do you mean? You didn't tell me *any* of that! She wouldn't do that...would she?"

Barbara knew she *had* to tell her the full truth. She couldn't hide the reality from her best friend. That wouldn't be right, especially from someone who was hurting so much. Some had even dubbed Harleen a devilish "dominatrix." Barbara could see why people said that, but she always saw more in people than the labels that were thrust upon them either by the media, city leaders, snobbish wealthy people, or the population at-large.

"I'm sorry, Renee...I didn't want to hurt you anymore...with everything you were going through...but to answer your question...yes, she did *all* of that. I was *there*. I know. And she calls herself 'Harley Quinn' now."

This caught her off guard. She had heard officers in the station talk about *that* woman and how she was partnered with a maniac who called himself 'Joker.' How could she have *ever* been a relationship with a woman like that! Maybe she should just stop dating altogether. She *detested* those engaged in "vigilante justice." She was horrified that her sweet Harleen, as *she* knew her, had captured and manipulated people. Had she been a menace? Maybe she had been quiet and calculating, while telling people what to do. Maybe she was pushing her pain onto others. As she knew her, Harleen would *never* do anything like that to her. She couldn't even imagine it. So, Barbara's words broke her heart.

Barbara could tell that her friend was distressed. She couldn't stand to see her like that. She tried to comfort her the best she could. That is what friends did for each other. She didn't care that Renée was a bit overweight, nor would she *ever* comment on her appearance in a negative way. She knew that her friend had prepared herself to be there

that morning, whether putting the pink lipstick on her lips, wearing black high heels, or sporting a light-brown jacket and a matching skirt. Her jacket covered a white shirt. To top it off was a pink necktie that she usually wore. Her hair was nicely groomed. She looked so amazing, for a woman in her late twenties, with her clothes fitting with her body's curves.

"It's okay, Renée. *No one* knew that about Harleen or what she was doing to others. Please don't be so hard on yourself."

She put her hand on Renée's shoulder as she started crying. Tears streamed down her face. Her eyes started to get puffy. As she looked up, through her blurred vision (caused by her crying), she saw Barbara's face. It was a few inches away. If *more* people had been there, they wouldn't have been this close. Since very few people were there this time of day, they could be *more open* about their feelings. Otherwise, perhaps, they would have been more reserved.

She never knew that her eyelashes were *so damn beautiful*. She'd never seen them this close to her. She almost got lost in her friend's dark brown eyes. She wished she could look at them... forever. *What* was she saying! Why was she thinking about her friend in this way! Then she realized something that she had been long denying: she had *a crush*… on Barbara. Oh no. This wasn't good. She couldn't treat Barbara like her rebound. That wouldn't be right.

Little did she know, but Barbara had the *same feelings* bubbling up inside her. She was trying everything she could to hold herself back. She had never seen Renée that close either. She almost was drawn into her friend's black eyes. The last thing she would want was for her friend to see that she was blushing. She would *totally* lose it. She wouldn't know how to handle it. She had to deal with this carefully, with such a wonderful bella donna, with such lush black hair.

Renée smashed apart the awkwardness between them, preventing Barbara from embarrassing herself. She looked directly into her friend's dark brown eyes as she spoke. She wanted to express how appreciative she was for her being there. Barbara had helped her so many times and this was one of them. She couldn't be more grateful that this public defender had taken time out of her busy schedule to be there with her, *of all people*. After all, she was starting to realize that only ethical action she could take as cop in Gotham was to quit, throwing away her idealistic goal to stand against a corrupt system. For now, she wanted to stick it out. That could change in the future.

"Thanks, Barbara. I couldn't have gotten through this without you. I'm so lucky to have someone so talented, *attractive*, and smart, standing by me, through thick and thin."

She couldn't believe herself. She couldn't stop herself as the words flowed right out of her. Barbara couldn't believe what she was hearing. What the heck was her friend saying? And why? Did she feel the same way? There was no doubt that she had feelings for her friend, but she never wanted to admit them as long as Harleen was in a loving relationship with her. It was different now. Maybe she had a chance this time. If so, she wouldn't let this opportunity melt away.

Before she even thought of it, she blurted out, "Thanks, Renée, I think you are smart, graceful, stunning, and talented too. Who could be a whip-smart police detective but *you*?"

As they laughed about it, Renée tried to remain appreciative. She couldn't lose Barbara. Especially not now. She wouldn't let that happen. With everything happening in the town as of late, she couldn't let her friend get hurt. If that happened, she would be devastated. She wouldn't know what in the world she would do. How could she live with herself? She didn't know. She didn't want to even think about that ever happening, not right now. She pushed it to the back of her mind. Instead, she stared in awe at Barbara's striking dyed red hair, which was naturally black and curly. She often tied it behind her head in a knot. This time, it was more free flowing.

"Barbara, thanks for the compliments. You are *such* a dear person to me."

What Barbara said next surprised her, and maybe even herself. Her face started to get even warmer, making her brownish cheeks even lighter in some places. If anyone else had been there, and looked at her, they might have gotten the *wrong idea*. Luckily, the shop was pretty empty this time of day. And the owner didn't care what the patrons did as long as they didn't wreck the place. She was pretty chill about everything.

"Maybe we should get to know each other better...over a drink...you know at a bar...sometime."

Was her friend...asking her out? Renée couldn't believe her ears. Had she heard wrong? She decided to tease her about it. She nearly giggled but stopped herself. She wanted to be serious about what Barbara was asking of her.

"Are you sure, Ms. Public Defender? Isn't going out on a date a...conflict of interest, you know?"

Barbara laughed off her comment. She *knew* that Renée was messing with her. And she *liked it*. Something about her friend (and likely to be more than that now) made her feel warm and fuzzy inside. She teased her friend back.

"Nah, it isn't, not at all." She paused. "That's because... my interest is only in *you*, Renée Maria Montoya. The only conflict is if *you* don't agree."

She had really said it! She couldn't take it back. It was far too late for her to do that. She didn't want to take her words back. She felt that a weight had been lifted.

Renée decided to embrace her friend's request. Maybe she had some issues with the whole Harleen / Harley thing that she had to work out. Barbara could be a partner who was *new and fresh*, who could help her through these problems. She wouldn't be someone that would abandon her. She wouldn't be a rebound. Instead, in her mind, Barbara would be a person who deeply, and steadfastly, cared about her. She was willing to give a date a try. What did she have to lose?

"That's fine with me, Barbara. Let's meet this Friday, at the Pussycat Diner, at 7 o'clock...after work."

Barbara smiled. She couldn't be happier and more excited. She spoke softly, but not under her breath. "Sure, I'm down. Sounds like a date!"

As they both left the coffee shop, together, Barbara shouted, "see you later, *girlfriend*!" Again, they were lucky that no one said anything to them. Everyone else was so busy with their lives they didn't even notice what she had said.

Renée blushed. She waved. They went their separate ways. She wasn't sure she could get used to *this* kind of thing. How could she when she was, *now*, dating a splendid, smart, pretty, and capable woman? It would be different from when she dated Harleen. She wouldn't let what happened with her ex ever happen again. She was optimistic this would work out and confident they would be there to support one another.

End Notes

I am cross-posting this from CFAA. I am eschewing the tag "+Modern Age (1986-Present)". I have updated the fic from the version on CFAA when publishing it here. When posting this on CFAA, I received permission to add this fandom there. This fic follows the tagging rules on CFAA, which are different from anywhere else I have ever posted. This fic is serves as the first-ever fic for Batman: Caped Crusader on that site. It is a fandom I'd love to write more for, perhaps as a continuation of this fic, along with fics for any other fandoms currently on that site and elsewhere. Compared with the original fic, which was 1,272 words long, the version on CFAA was 2,687 words long, with 1,415 words added here, or an about 111.3% increase. As noted earlier, I slightly expanded it when posting here.

The line "Harleen's parents immigrated from Korea before she was born" was inspired by the fact that the parents of Jamie Chung, who voices Harleen/Harley, immigrated to the U.S. from Korea (specifically South Korea) in the early 1980s. As for Michelle C. Bonilla, who voices Renée, she states on her official website that she is a "proud Chicana born and raised in Hollywood, CA." I used that to inspire the line "At the same time, Renée's parents had also immigrated, but from Mexico, after the massive political and social upheaval in that country." I'm leaving it open, but you could say the latter part of that sentence is a reference to the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) since Caped Crusader may be set in the 1930s. Batman's design in the series, is, according to Bruce Timm, inspired by "horror films from the 1930s and ’40s and film noir from the 1940s." Furthermore, Renée's fandom wiki page describes her as Mexican-American which is reflected in this fic.

In order to expand this fic, I used articles like "Meet the New Voices of Batman, Harley Quinn, and Catwoman: Exclusive" (Vanity Fair), Batman: Caped Crusader first look reveals Asian American Harley Quinn and 'really weird' Dark Knight (Entertainment Weekly), Batman: Caped Crusader Season 1 Review (IGN), and The Women Shine in "Batman: Caped Crusader" (DC Comics) as inspirations.

Originally, I had been planning to pull in some of the other fics on AO3 for Caped Crusader. Despite her key role in the series, very few writers feature Harleen/Harley as a character. One of those was "Ask the Question" by Angry9guy and HRCStanley97. The relationship between Harley and Renée has a specific focus in chapter 3 in an explicit sexual way, while Harley has a key role in chapters 4 and 5. However, that was not what as going for with this fic. Similarly, how she is depicted in chapter 2 of "Tales From the Grimm" by JonyBoy22, throughout "Superman's Daughter" by Kervia (only briefly mentioned), "Another

Joker and Harley Story" by SpyStories, and the two-chapter "Mama wants love" by Katy_L1988, did not not vibe with what I wanted for this fic. Some of the aforementioned fics may be an inspiration for future stories, if I do a spinoff/continuation.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!